



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

# RECENT RUSSIAN FICTION:

## A CONVERSATION

BY W. D. H. AND T. S. P.

---

W. D. H.: What is the name of that newest and greatest Russian writer whom you were talking to me about last summer?

T. S. P.: Artsibashef.

W. D. H.: You feel that he represents the great thing in modern Russian fiction?

T. S. P.: In my opinion, yes. People object to him a good deal, and very naturally, but it seems to me that what he does well he does better than any one.

W. D. H.: Does he do it comparably to Turgenief or Tolstoy?

T. S. P.: He is not to be compared with them in any way; he is entirely different.

W. D. H.: Is he a voluminous person like Tolstoy?

T. S. P.: Not very; two or three volumes of stories and one published novel and one novel he is writing now.

W. D. H.: Is he a condensed person like Turgenief?

T. S. P.: He is not at all like him; he is more like Maupassant.

W. D. H.: Has he gone to French sources for his form and his literary ideal?

T. S. P.: He writes somewhat like Maupassant and I should think he has probably studied him; I know he is not like any one else.

W. D. H.: What I was trying to do was to orient myself in regard to the man. At the time eighteen or twenty years ago when we were beginning to read the Russians and about the Russians, and were very much concerned in them, the only criticism I found was in what Melchoir de Voguë had written and what Dupuy had written, but people must have written a lot more.

T. S. P.: They all said very much the same thing.

W. D. H.: You don't think there has been very much of importance said since, about the great Russian school that revealed itself to us then?

T. S. P.: No, I don't think there is much. I think a very good exposition is found in Prince Kropotkin's book about Russian literature.

W. D. H.: I suppose you began first—I did—with Turgenief.

T. S. P.: Yes.

W. D. H.: You translated the one we liked very much: *Dmitri Rudine*. Did you translate that from the French or from the German?

T. S. P.: I translated that from the French. I think probably the German editions, the Mitau editions, had not begun then.

W. D. H.: Of course my next experience after Turgenief was all Tolstoy. And it began through you. Years before I was calling on Professor and Mrs. G—— in Cambridge and *War and Peace* in a French version was lying on their table. They said, "There is a curious book," and they seemed a little bewildered by it, but they were such intelligent people that they could not help valuing it; they said it was a great book, but they spoke mostly about its physical vastness. Then, years later, when you came to me with *Anna Karenina* you said: "Here is something which I would like you to read. It is the old French business of the seventh commandment, but it is not treated at all as the French novelists treat it." I think you left it with me and I must have read it first in French.

T. S. P.: Yes. The English translations appeared later.

W. D. H.: Then of course that led backward and it led forward among Russian authors for me. I don't know whether we talked much of Gogol or not at that time.

T. S. P.: Well, we did. I remember I went out to see you when you were living in B—— and I was reading the *Dead Souls* in German, I think. I don't think there was any French translation then of that. And certainly no English one.

W. D. H.: I think I read *Dead Souls* first in French, and then afterward we had a very good English translation of it—I dare say by Nathan Haskell Dole. And that we read aloud together in my family, and we were immensely amused

with it; but before that somehow I had got hold of *Tarass Boulba*, which I read.

T. S. P.: That is, in French.

W. D. H.: That must have been in French. I am not sure whether I read it in French or in English. (Curious how one doesn't remember!) Then I understood from those critical authorities that there had been a great change in Gogol's literary heart; that he had turned over from what was evidently rather a romantic tendency in *Tarass Boulba* to the extreme realism of *Dead Souls*.

T. S. P.: Oh yes, he did, undoubtedly.

W. D. H.: Well, I had gone back to him—and next, it seems to me, I went forward to Dostoyevsky. I think it was you who spoke to me first about *Crime and Punishment*.

T. S. P.: I think very likely; I was very much interested in it.

W. D. H.: I read it and I was tremendously stirred with it, and I said to myself, "I will read everything that man has written." I have never succeeded in reading anything more! Is that your experience?

T. S. P.: Yes. My Russian teachers have all wanted me to read some other things of his, but I haven't yet done it and I think I shall evade them the rest of my life.

W. D. H.: Well, now among the new men is there anybody like Turgenief?

T. S. P.: No, there is nobody just like him.

W. D. H.: There is nobody like Turgenief, as he was like Pushkin?

T. S. P.: No, there is not. But there are very good men in their way; a very different way. There are several good ones. There is Tchekof.

W. D. H.: I was going to speak of Tchekof.

T. S. P.: His short stories are very good and his plays are better still. I prefer his plays to his stories; his plays are very fine. They are different from other modern plays inasmuch as they seem not to be constructed, not built up, but are like peeps into a house. Of course to get that effect one has to contrive very carefully, but the contrivance is not shown; you see no architecture. It seems, as you read it, ineffectual and leading to nothing; people showing their qualities in little scraps of conversation. It seems most incoherent, but when you have read the thing you find it hangs together beautifully.

W. D. H.: Of course nobody was a more careful structurist than Ibsen, but it does not show in Ibsen; does it show less in Tchekof?

T. S. P.: I don't know Ibsen really well enough to compare them. I know that I like Tchekof's plays very much.

W. D. H.: Well, has anybody come forward from Gogol in the sort of humorous realism of *Dead Souls*?

T. S. P.: No, I don't think there is any such humorist. There is a gleam of humorous perception in Tchekof, but the whole country of Russia is so black with unhappiness that humor does not seem to abound there. Tchekof has what would be humor under other circumstances, but it does not show as humor in his work.

W. D. H.: But besides Tchekof is there no humor in anybody?

T. S. P.: I have never found any. Tchekof has a little humor in some of his plays, but such a weak and gentle trickle of it that would hardly do for a play at a country fair. His real strength goes into thunder-storms, and gloom, and terror, and things of that sort.

W. D. H.: Then Gogol is about the only humorist that you know of amongst the Russians.

T. S. P.: Yes, just about.

W. D. H.: What was the *Revisor*—his play that was so much talked of?

T. S. P.: You don't know that?

W. D. H.: Never have read it.

T. S. P.: It is almost the best play that was ever written. The scene lies in a little provincial town where news is brought that the government inspector has come; the man does not declare his intention of inspecting, but they know he must be the government inspector because they have had word he was coming from Petersburg. The governor, the mayor of the town, are in a great state of excitement and all the officials; and the mayor invites him to his house and they all offer to lend him money. The man is really a young student who has lost his money gambling; he is very much surprised at the attention that is paid to him, but is quite master of the situation. He takes money from them all; the graft that has been going on is exposed, in their toadying and his receiving, and he finally gets off with his pockets full of rubles. Then the messenger comes in and says to them, "The inspector has just arrived." You

know the story about the play, how the Emperor Nicholas gave Gogol permission to write it. It is always being acted.

W. D. H.: In the most modern phase of Russian literature is there anything poetical?

T. S. P.: I have Nekrasoff's poetry; one of my Russian friends sent it to me and asked me to read it, but it has hung fire. I have left it in the country, and next summer, if the season is dry and long enough and tedious enough, I may read some of that, but I am not eager to get at it.

W. D. H.: Are there any other poets?

T. S. P.: There must be. Yes, there are. I don't know much about them.

W. D. H.: Then there is nobody apparently a successor to Gogol, or in his line, you say.

T. S. P.: No, there is no one.

W. D. H.: I read a Russian story once called *The Cruel City* by a writer who called himself Korolenko, which I understand is a pseudonym. That had some humor and lightness in it, although it was dismal enough in places. Could you say they have anything like light fiction at all?

T. S. P.: Yes, I had one novel sent to me the other day. I could not read it, it was so light. I can find the like in every language. There were the little incidents; I was sure it was going to end happily. But I did not learn Russian to read that kind of thing. Just so I had a Russian temperance novel sent me; but I can read temperance novels in English. What little I have read has only been what seemed most intensely Russian. That is what I am trying to get at; to get the flavor of that.

W. D. H.: Yes, of course. And this new man you told me of. I forget his name.

T. S. P.: Artsibashef.

W. D. H.: Oh yes—Artsibashef. There isn't much "lift" in him, is there?

T. S. P.: No; but he is delightfully agonizing.

W. D. H.: Those passages from the story you read me last summer were certainly agonizing.

T. S. P.: Yes. They were from a story called *On the White Snow*. (Reads:)

"Lioldvic Anderson the teacher came out into the school garden and determined to walk to the grove which looked like lace lying on the white snow about two versts from the village. The day was light and fresh. The wet, dark stalks

of the plants stood out against the snow, the air was light and clear as it is only in very early spring.

“ ‘One more spring in my life!’ thought Anderson, with a sigh, for he was a little inclined to sentimentality, and, gazing through his glasses, he laid his hands behind his back, twirled his walking-stick, and stepped forward. At that moment he saw in the road at the end of the garden a number of people and horses.

“ They were soldiers. Their dark uniforms stood out against the white snow, their guns sparkled, and one could see from a distance how the horses crept clumsily along in the snow. For a moment Anderson could not make out what they were doing, but suddenly he felt and saw they were doing something strange and terrible, and instinctively it flashed through him that he ought to hide so as not to be seen by them. So hastily, with his hands still clasped behind him, Anderson turned to one side, fell on his knees in the soft, wet snow behind a pile of last year’s straw and weeds. From there, by stretching his neck a little, he could see what the soldiers were doing.

“ They were about twenty in number, and among them one officer, a young man, on horseback in a gray uniform with silver trimmings. His face was so ruddy that even from a distance Anderson could see the clear outline of his blond mustache and eyebrows. He said something and his clear voice reached Anderson’s ears without difficulty.

“ ‘I know what I have to do,’ he shouted, with his hand on his hip and gazing at some one below him in the band of foot soldiers. ‘I will show you how to riot—accursed rascals!’

“ A great terror seized Anderson’s heart. ‘My God, is it possible?’ flashed into his mind and his blood ran cold.

“ ‘Captain,’ some one answered very quietly from among the soldiers in a restrained voice, ‘you have no right. There is a court for these matters—’

“ ‘Silence!’ shouted the officer, waving his white glove, and one heard his rage in his voice. ‘I will give you a court, Ivanof. Go ahead!’

“ He touched his rein and turned to one side. Lioldvic Anderson noticed mechanically how the horse moved gingerly and mincingly, with ears erect, stepping as if it were dancing. At that moment there was a little stir among the soldiers and they fell apart, leaving an empty place, and there

stood three men, two tall, the other short and round. Anderson saw his white head and his prominent red mustache.

"He understood what it all meant and what he was about to see, but this was so unexpected and so terrible that he thought he was dreaming.

" 'It's so pleasant and beautiful—the snow, the fields, the sky, the spring air—and they are going to kill these people; it's impossible!' This flashed through his head and seemed to produce that dizzy confusion which seizes a man when he sees, hears, and feels something different from what he is accustomed to.

"The three men in black stood in a row by the fence, two were together, the other a little apart.

" 'Captain,' said one of them, Anderson could not make out which, 'God sees us.' Eight soldiers hastily dismounted with clatter of swords and spurs. They were nervous, as if they were planning some thievish action. There was silence for a second while the soldiers arranged themselves in a line before the men in black and raised their guns. One of them knocked off his cap, which fell in the snow. He picked it up and put it on white with snow. The officer's horse still danced in the same place with its ears pricked up, and the other horses, raising their ears and turning their long, wise heads, gazed quietly at the men in black.

"Suddenly there was a deafening roar that sent Anderson trembling. He distinctly, and at the same time with agony, as in a dream, saw the black figures fall, the pale flash spring from the guns, and the light smoke rising in the clear air, and noticed how the mounted soldiers, without looking at the men who were killed, hurried away along the sloppy path with their sabers rattling and spurring on their steeds. All these things he saw from the middle of the path without knowing when or why he had come out from corpse, his face was covered with a light sweat, he trembled behind the heap of straw. Liiodvic Anderson was as a and tottered in a most complete despair. The feeling was something like nausea, only fainter and more terrible.

"When the soldiers had disappeared beyond the grove people began to gather at the scene of the execution, although before no one had been visible. The men who had been shot lay behind the hedge on the edge of the road where the snow had not been trampled on and was still



clean and white. There were three of them—two grown men and a young man with light hair, who lay in the snow, seeming to be supported by his long, thin neck. The face of the next one was not to be seen because he had fallen forward into a pool of blood; the third, a large, black-haired man, lay stretched out at full length and his arms outspread in the blood-stained snow. The day was bright and clear. The white snow, the wet, dark branches of the hedge, the red spots in the snow, and the motionless black figures stood out in sharp contrast; the air was clear and transparent as it is only in early spring. The cluster of trees that stood near showed swelling buds.

“The men who had been shot lay motionless, black in the white snow, and from a little way off it was impossible to understand what was so terrible in their calm at the edge of the narrow road.

“That night Liodvic Anderson went to his little room in the school-house; he did not write any poetry as he usually did, but he stood by the window and, gazing at the pale, distant moon in the blue, half-cloudy sky, thought. His thoughts were gloomy and depressed, as if a cloud lay upon his brain. From the window in the vague moonlight he could dimly see the black silhouettes of the hedge, of the trees, of the pale garden, and it seemed to Liodvic Anderson that he saw also the three murdered men, two full grown and one youth. They were lying there now on the side of the road near the empty, silent field, and, as if alive, their dead, pale eyes were staring at the cold, distant moon. ‘A time will come,’ bitterly thought Liodvic Anderson, ‘when it will be impossible for one man to kill another. A time will come when these soldiers and this officer will understand what they have done and will understand that that for which they killed these three men was as necessary, as important, as precious for these same soldiers and officers as for their victims—’

“‘Yes,’ he repeated, with an air of triumph and with streaming eyes, ‘that time will come. They will understand.’

“And the pale circle of the moon grew blurred and confused in his eyes. There seized him a great pity for the three men who were slain, whose eyes gazed silently and sadly at the moon without seeing it, and mingled with that pity was a feeling of bitter hatred.

"But Liodyie Anderson calmed himself and muttered, quietly, 'They know not what they do,' and from that old familiar sentence he drew strength to overcome his rage and grief."\*

W. D. H.: Agonizing—agonizing, I should say still.

T. S. P.: Unfortunately many of his novels cannot be recommended to every one, but they are extremely powerful. In this one I am just reading, which is in course of publication, he describes the death of an old man, an old professor, who feels his mind leaving him and himself sinking away in a most harrowing way; but it is really beautifully done. As a work of art it is astounding. Then he describes the life of a frivolous young fellow with equal skill; and they are contrasted one with the other in a most vivid way. And he does it with no exaggeration.

W. D. H.: No. That the Russians seem incapable of.

T. S. P.: He has absolute calm and his style is so moderate. He uses so few adjectives, but they are immensely impressive. There is a modern Russian school that uses adjectives in a way to drive the student to despair. All the adjectives that are and are not in the dictionary they use, but they don't produce half the effect of this man with "cool, bright, dark, gentle, hard"—just the ordinary adjectives of daily use; but they count more than thunderstorms.

W. D. H.: Of course if there is not a profusion of them they do count. Gorky: does this new man derive from him or follow after him or anything of that kind?

T. S. P.: I should doubt it. This new man writes something like Gorky; Gorky has the same bitter strength that this man has, but I don't think Artsibashef descends from him; I think he would have appeared whether Gorky had written or not.

W. D. H.: From what you read to me of this man last summer I should not think he *intends* to be bitter.

T. S. P.: No, not a bit.

W. D. H.: He does not intend to embitter you? He simply gives the facts?

T. S. P.: He simply records. There is a singular absence of animus in him. He is like the man who has the panorama go by and sits at the front and explains it. He did not

\* The version here given is the revision of the translation originally made *viva voce* from the Russian text.

paint the panorama. It passes before him and his voice tells you what it is. That is all. He has no desire to make the world better or worse. He represents the man who thinks the only thing to do is to kill yourself; he represents the perfectly frivolous young man; he represents the man who wants a revolution, but he is impartial with them all. He is like the cinematograph.

W. D. H.: That came into my mind.

T. S. P.: You cannot tell his own feeling about things. His critics say he is like some German philosopher; one man having said it, they all repeat it.

W. D. H.: I suppose really if he is very much of an artist he has not much philosophy.

T. S. P.: I don't think he has any.

W. D. H.: It is his business to see and record?

T. S. P.: Yes, and what he sees is so tremendous that his record makes a great impression.

W. D. H.: Yes. Now, there was something in our talk in the old days that always interested me very much, and that was your notion that the simplicity of the Russians was possible through their want of a literary past. You still feel that?

T. S. P.: Perfectly.

W. D. H.: That is interesting, I think.

T. S. P.: Most interesting. They never had any Renaissance; they simply grew up. I feel that all the time in comparing the French translation of *War and Peace* with the original. Tolstoy writes in a perfectly simple way, the way one would write a letter to one's aunt with no literary phrasing at all; his style is quite awkward at times.

W. D. H.: Yes?

T. S. P.: Almost crude at moments. In the French there would be those old and faded flowers of rhetoric brought in. Where he said he did not like a certain thing at all the French would say the thing "seemed repugnant to him."

W. D. H.: I know it; that is their tradition; that is their convention; they must do it that way.

T. S. P.: They must do it that way. And in Russia there was no time when one learned that way of saying things.

W. D. H.: Then this new man, Artsibashef, does he write like Tolstoy?

T. S. P.: No, he writes like Maupassant.

W. D. H.: Maupassant is as simple as a Frenchman can be.

T. S. P.: Artsibashef does not have flowers of rhetoric; he describes with almost absolute nakedness, but utmost simplicity. There are other men who have those flowers. I have read some stories in the many-adjective movement where they were. This man has none of them.

W. D. H.: Well, then, what about the material of Artsibashef?

T. S. P.: Entirely the present condition of Russia.

W. D. H.: Does he permit himself, or is he permitted, to write about political and social matters?

T. S. P.: He always has trouble with the censor.

W. D. H.: What I fancy is that in Russia a man could not permit himself, or would not be permitted, to write down just what he sees.

T. S. P.: He would always be liable to get into trouble.

W. D. H.: Even if he wrote it without color of personal feeling?

T. S. P.: Of course. Yes, with the police given the power that they have. A great deal would depend on the state of the nerves of the censor when he examined the manuscript, and if he was annoyed with the young people in it he would easily find something to object to, but I am surprised at the number of things you find there that get by the censor. In some of Artsibashef's stories he describes most vividly the state of mind in the agitators—such as one who is deputed to kill a governor. On the whole, yes, I am more surprised at the things that pass the censor; I don't know how many things do not pass, but the censor allows a very frequent description of indecencies and murders and assassinations and things of that sort. But what Artsibashef seems to me to do is to describe people as he knows them or thinks they are. He wrote a novel called *Sanini*, I think in 1905. It came out in 1908, and during that time there had been a great change in the mood of the students, and people thought that he was describing the result of the change, whereas he had written it before the change; it was apparently the way he thought the change was going, and they seemed to think because he described this result that it was his ideal of what ought to be. It was not his ideal at all, any more than it was his ideal, when he describes a murder, that people should commit murder.

Of course that is the fantastic and mistaken notion which the outsider always has—the notion that a man describes what he wants and not what he sees.

W. D. H.: As to the material of these books, of course it is what he sees. But the events, are they related sometimes to what we call morality or immorality—the sexual phase?

T. S. P.: You mean the incidents?

W. D. H.: Yes.

T. S. P.: In describing the lives of the students, I mean the men and women, of course questions of morality come up.

W. D. H.: And he is frank about the facts?

T. S. P.: Absolutely. He is the frankest man that ever lived. He does not use such material to make his novels alluring; it simply comes in as part of the day's work. At least, it is so where he is least offensive. At times, however, he carries his frankness to an impossible degree; he passes all limits, and it is for this that the critics have very justly blamed him. His manner is not pornographic, but the matter is. This is a great pity; the man is a master of his art, he is sincerely moved by all the pathetic futility of life, and in a few lines he sets the scene before you. The trouble is with the scenes he is willing to set before you. He is indignant with his critics for condemning them, but the critics, too, are compelled to tell the truth.

W. D. H.: You remember when Tolstoy's death of Ivan Ilyitch turned all cultivated readers pale?

T. S. P.: I do.

W. D. H.: There is simply the story of a man who is putting up a picture and twists himself and gets something out of order in his interior and he begins to die. Of course the great importance of that book was his feeling about death; and not so much his anxiety in regard to any life hereafter as his remorse for the vacuity and futility of his life here in the past. Is there anything of that sort, of spiritual feeling—

T. S. P.: Artsibashef is full of it.

W. D. H.: Then I should like to read him.

T. S. P.: You would like to read him. I am always feeling that I am admiring him too much, but I cannot read him without immense interest. He is always describing the death of some one and doing it so wonderfully.

W. D. H.: He personalizes it to you, makes it yourself?

T. S. P.: Absolutely. No one ever wrote with greater power.

W. D. H.: Then there is another thing in the Russians that has interested me, and that is following a character into the Valley of the Shadow of Death; Turgenief does it and Tolstoy does it; Turgenief does it once, Tolstoy does it twice; once in *The Scenes of the Siege of Sebastopol* and once in *The Death of Prince Andrew*; and Turgenief does it in *The Virgin Soul* where Neshdanof shoots himself. Does Artsibashef do anything of that sort?

T. S. P.: Yes. In this last novel the conclusion is universal carnage. The few who escape a lingering death, lovingly recounted by the author, are obliged to resort to suicide. All the fashionable methods of self-murder are described by an expert. No such general slaughter has been seen in fiction since Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*. We find his heroes dandling the idea of killing themselves, setting it in every light, regarding it as the only proper solution of every question, and then accomplishing it. As a mere matter of literary art he overdoes it here most lamentably.

W. D. H.: Then there is something else in Tolstoy which he does two or three times, but chiefly in a sketch called "Master and Man," where the master and the man are lost together in a snow-drift. The superior has always felt his superiority, but when it comes to their dying, their freezing together, he recognizes their essential unity as two human creatures and feels that they are one and the same. Does Artsibashef do anything of that sort?

T. S. P.: That does not enter so far as I have seen. No, Tolstoy always has a moral background; and this man has not, in the sense that we understand it, at all.

W. D. H.: He gives the thing and lets the application take care of itself?

T. S. P.: Exactly.

W. D. H.: Tolstoy cannot do that.

T. S. P.: No, he cannot because Tolstoy is so interested in saving the soul of the world; and this man is not. When an old fellow dies in this novel he crawls out of bed and he is on his knees and prays; the man had never felt the slightest interest in that sort of thing before, but nothing is made of it; it is never announced that that is a better thing to do. It is merely this old man happened to do it.

W. D. H.: Well, is there anything in the new Russian

literature like what one is obliged to call our localism—that is, are the Russians more homogeneous than we are?

T. S. P.: Oh, so far as I know they are, because the same civilization is thinly spread over the whole country.

W. D. H.: That is what I was thinking of, so far as we have done anything worth while, it is in each man or woman studying his own little corner of the country and getting at its difference; then the difference is something of which you can be conscious and you value it. But in Russia I fancy that the conditions are almost universally the same?

T. S. P.: I fancy they are. That would be the impression made upon me by their literature.

W. D. H.: In the town there would be everywhere the artisan and the employer, and in the country the peasant and the landlord.

T. S. P.: Yes, nothing else. That would be my impression. I think there is this about Russia to be said, that the young men there often have nothing to do; a great many who are not obliged to occupy themselves have no interest; they don't go, as they do here, into business that takes all the bright young fellows off; they are left free to indulge in the only thing they can indulge in, and that is writing. So the best go into literature, and there is a vast crowd of people beginning to write there, and then the good ones go ahead. You have read Andréef's stories? A number of them have appeared in the American magazines. Some are very good, but they always seem to me overwrought, violently overwrought, as if out of disturbed nerves; so they don't interest me as much as those that are more what I am pleased to call better done, more artistically done. But he is a very important man.

W. D. H.: Then there isn't that spiritual yearning of Tolstoy's, the longing to be good, in the newer men?

T. S. P.: No.

W. D. H.: Is it because they have given it all up?

T. S. P.: They have given it up in despair. The fact is the country doesn't know what to do now. It is like a boat which has lost its sails and its rudder; the people are floating about and moving this way and that, not knowing at all how to go anywhere or to get anything. When the progressives had their ideal of educating the people and at once becoming very powerful, then they were comparatively hopeful; but of course when they tried that they very soon

failed, and now they don't know what to do. They have all sorts of fantastic notions which a man like Artsibashef exposes to you, but none of them can do anything.

W. D. H.: Well, this terrible reaction from the hopeful conditions of 1906, when the revolution seemed to be going forward there and not going backward at all—is there anything of that sort reflected in Artsibashef?

T. S. P.: Yes, a great deal—the uncertainty.

W. D. H.: He recognizes that? And the suspense?

T. S. P.: And the suspense. In fact, a revolution that consists in blowing up and pillaging does not lead anywhere; all that seems foolish and monstrous; and now the Russians are marking time, they are drifting. Of course one cannot be a prophet, but the situation is not so inspiring to their novelists.

W. D. H.: Artsibashef is not a Jew?

T. S. P.: No, he isn't. A short sketch of his life is given in the German translation of his works. He is of Tartar descent, though with admixture of Russian, French, Georgian, and Polish blood. One of his ancestors was the famous Polish hero Kosciusko. He was born in 1878 and intended to become an artist; but he was too poor to buy paints and canvas and was forced to support himself by drawing caricatures. He wrote a story which he managed to get printed, and then his true vocation showed itself to him; he became a writer.

W. D. H.: What occurred to me was to ask whether the Jew in the new Russian literature, as we may call it, has done anything analogous to what Artsibashef has done.

T. S. P.: No, I fancy not, because the condition of the Jew in Russia—he would scarcely live there.

W. D. H.: I did not know but there was some Jew articulate enough to talk about the conditions.

T. S. P.: I don't think so. The Jew doesn't get into the literary movement at all. That is my opinion.

W. D. H.: I asked you about the recent Russian plays and I think you spoke of them. There are no humorists, you think. And the morality of Tolstoy, we have touched upon that. As far as the modern novelists have plots, do they deal with the seventh commandment and the same tiresome old things?

T. S. P.: I dare say some do; they deal with all the commandments impartially.



W. D. H.: They don't make the seventh their job as the French do?

T. S. P.: Oh no, not at all.

W. D. H.: Now, then, there is that curious thing which always struck me in the Russian novelists—the horror of death. We are all afraid to die, but they seem peculiarly afraid to die, though they don't mind being killed.

T. S. P.: Well, as I said, Artsibashef is always writing about that. It comes into many of his novels and he writes some of his best things about it.

W. D. H.: Well, are there any French or German or English translations of the new school?

T. S. P.: There are some German translations of Artsibashef; no French.

W. D. H.: And no English, of course.

T. S. P.: No English that I have seen.

W. D. H.: Are there any criticisms or studies of the new school in Russian?

T. S. P.: Yes, there is one by Serge Persky in French on the contemporary Russian novel; it is a very good book; it came out the other day. He translates Russian novels and tales into French and he has written some little things of his own, but this study is his best work.

W. D. H.: Then, for vastness and profundity and exaltation and all that, you have to go to *War and Peace* still?

T. S. P.: That is still the greatest; but I should say there are no books written between that and the *Iliad* to compare with either. There never will be for another thousand years another such book.

W. D. H.: I don't see why or how there should be.

T. S. P.: Exactly. But it seems to me that the Russian literature in fiction is still somewhat more interesting than that of a good many other countries. The French literature, the French novels, French stories, one has a more or less definite idea of, and the German—well, not *all* the German stories and novels are interesting, and not all the English ones, and not all the American ones. The Russians have, I think, a greater individuality, a greater charm, a greater vividness than the rest.

W. D. H.: So that if tolerably intelligent young men, as we were once tolerably intelligent and young, came to them now they would take the same interest in them we did twenty years ago?

T. S. P.: That I don't know, but I certainly take a great interest in them.

W. D. H.: I still think of *Dmitri Rudine* as one of the most interesting books I ever read.

T. S. P.: Very admirable—wonderful.

W. D. H.: I wonder if that period with the Russians has passed as well as that way of picturing it?

T. S. P.: Yes, I think it has.

W. D. H.: For instance, I don't suppose there is that sort of empty expectation and yearning that you find in *Rudine*.

T. S. P.: No, but I fancy the sort of man *Rudine* was, the sort of limp talker, still exists. The Russians are great at talking. It seems to the outsider as if when two Russians got together it was a question which should tell the other most—give him all his opinions on every subject under heaven; they are very fond of exposing their views to each other, as *Dmitri Rudine* did.

W. D. H.: Yes, I know; but I don't think they are autobiographers, as we are. They don't want to talk about themselves so much as about what they think.

T. S. P.: Yes, what they think. They are full of interest in what they think; most amusing. They all are in the novels, and at first I thought it was a literary device.

W. D. H.: No, it is not. It is what is going on in their minds.

T. S. P.: It is the only way you can make them lifelike.

W. D. H.: Does *Artsibashef* use the inward, the interior, drama as much as Tolstoy does?

T. S. P.: No.

W. D. H.: Half the drama in Tolstoy is what goes on in the man's brain.

T. S. P.: He is not at all like Tolstoy. He has a certain amount of interior drama. For instance, in this novel which I'm reading there is an officer who is universally hated and is a selfish pig; but his heart is touched once, and for the first time in his life he receives some joy from being kind. It comes upon him suddenly.

W. D. H.: That is interesting.

T. S. P.: Yes, it is really most agreeable; and in that way the internal drama is played; the man has a new view of life and a new sensation.

W. D. H.: That is quite Russian! In *Artsibashef* or

in any of the moderns are there any new girl types like Natasha's in *War and Peace*?

T. S. P.: No, not so charming. There are some interesting ones.

W. D. H.: Is there any love-making or much love-making in his books?

T. S. P.: Not generally; not of a very exalted kind. No, you don't see charming creatures like that girl.

W. D. H.: Have you read *Hilda Lessways*?

T. S. P.: No, I have not read that.

W. D. H.: Well, there is a very important type in that girl with her wild, irresistible desire to experience, to know everything that is going on, and to be part of it. She is perfectly comfortable; she lives with her mother, but she wants to go out into the world and be as a man among men, yet still in a perfectly innocent way; and she goes and learns short-hand writing; she makes herself useful on a wretched little local newspaper that some faker starts; and she wants to follow life all through, not in a nasty way, but to know all the world that men know.

T. S. P.: Artsibashef describes some of the girls going into the revolutionary business very well.

W. D. H.: Is he allowed to do that?

T. S. P.: Yes. One of them is going to throw a bomb and fails to do it at the last moment because of the feeling of despair that comes over her—admirably done! That is in one of his short stories.

W. D. H.: So far as there is love-making, is it on our terms or does it depend upon the class they are in?

T. S. P.: They meet, oh yes, with the utmost freedom, but he is very awkward in that matter. In his shorter stories he describes children very well; and there is a sketch of a poor old blundering station-master in some out-of-the-way place where he hears there is going to be trouble in the capital, and he feels that they must have a little demonstration where he is with no notion of why or wherefore or what. He goes out and stops a train and then the soldiers come down and put him up against the wall and shoot him.

W. D. H.: From all, then, it appears to me that the present literary condition in Russia is not comparable in esthetic importance to that of Turgenieff's time.

T. S. P.: No. Because Turgenieff's was the culmination of a period of writing in which there had already been

some very good men—for instance, Pushkin, Lermontof, and Gogol. This man is the beginning of a new era, and the beginning is always crude and disturbed; something is yet to come out of it; the best is yet to come out of it. This is anything but a period of calm, and Turgenief wrote in a period of calm, of depression, depressed unhappy calm.

W. D. H.: Are there any women writing?

T. S. P.: There are some. None that I have read. In fact, that temperance novel was written by a woman and that trivial novel was written by a woman, but I could not read them.

W. D. H.: From what you say I understand the new Russians in number and amount of production are rather few.

T. S. P.: Well, there are a number like Kuprin. I don't care much for them. Kuprin is the most important.

W. D. H.: The Germans are still not in it with the Russians?

T. S. P.: In my opinion they are not in it.

W. D. H.: There seems to be a sort of suspense of faith in the French, too, doesn't there?

T. S. P.: Yes, I think so.

W. D. H.: The English have come forward lately. I think Merrick and Arnold Bennett and Phillpotts and Galsworthy are all doing good work.

T. S. P.: Yes.